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# THE ATHENÆUM.

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*Neque cuiquam tam statim clarum ingenium est, ut possit emergere; nisi illi materia, occasio,  
futor etiam, commendatorque contingat.*

PLIN. EPIST.

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## THE VAGRANT.

### No. VIII.

*Hac studia adolescentiam alunt, senectutem delectant, res prosperas ornant, adversis solatum ac perfugium praebent.*

TULLY.

OUR whole moral constitution shows, that we are formed to be social and active beings. Our wants are to be supplied by industry; and we depend upon one another for innumerable favours, for comforts and conveniences, and for all the happiness which we derive from social intercourse. But though impelled by our necessities to a life of activity and industry, and prompted by our social affections to partake of the enjoyments of society, yet, even to the most active and industrious, much time remains from their ordinary employments, which must be otherwise disposed of; and those who most indulge their fondness for company, find intervals, and those numerous and sometimes long, in which they must seek gratification from another source. It therefore becomes

an object of some importance, to possess those means which may afford happiness during the absence of company or dissipation, and the vacancy from business. And in this respect I have often had occasion to remark the advantages which a man of a cultivated mind, with a fondness for books, possesses over his more ignorant and less refined neighbour. He who has a mind thus disciplined, thus fitted for rational and liberal enjoyment, never need feel that listlessness which makes existence a burden, and which compels its miserable victim to seek a respite from his sufferings either in the company of the idle, or the haunts of dissipation. Instead of which, in the absence of living companions, he finds pleasure and instruction in conversing with the venerable dead, whose minds are portrayed in their works; and, in the want of business, he finds a most delightful employment in expanding his mind with new information and new acquisitions of knowledge. He can realize, when occa-

sion requires, the truth of that saying of one of the antients, that he was never less alone than when alone.

A gallant and luxurious nation are thus characterized by the poet:

*Unknown to them, when sensual pleasures cloy,  
To fill the languid pause with finer joy.*

Who that has enjoyed the pleasures of intellect, does not pity that people, which, when cloyed with the gratifications of sense, are unable to fill the "languid pause" which succeeds, with the refined and exalted pleasures of reason? Sensual pleasures, however exquisite and transporting in the enjoyment, are, in their nature, of short continuance, and grow less pleasurable the oftener they are repeated. It is out of the power of the most luxurious to engross all their lives with their darling gratifications. They will find a time when the appetite will be cloyed, and when the finest delicacies will cease to gratify. He who knows how to fill this "languid pause" with the "finer joy" of the intellect, with rational conversation or the acquisition of knowledge, may be considered as possessing a fountain of pleasure in himself, from which he may always draw in copious streams. Like a pure spring, the oftener it is used, the clearer it becomes. But how different is the condition of the sensualist! His pleasures are liable to be affected by every variation of external circumstances. He is dependent on the weather, and the caprices and whims of others, for what he should possess in himself. Should his promised gratifications fail, he is then left miserable, and without resource. In his own mind he finds all a barren and solitary waste. In company he seeks a suspension of his misery. But here too, amid companions as ignorant, as uninformed

and as gross as himself, he finds none of the rational pleasures of society. In the vacuity of thought, and the absence of other means of pleasure, they betake themselves to gross dissipation. Their conviviality is thus described by Johnson: "Their mirth (says he) is without images; their laughter without motive; their pleasures gross and sensual, in which the mind has no part; their conduct at once wild and mean: they laugh at order and law, but the frown of power dejects, and the eye of wisdom abashes them."

Such, among the young and gay, are often the effects of a want of a relish for intellectual pleasure. Were we to consider the state of mind alone which drives them to gratifications so low and grovelling, we might indeed view their conduct with less severity. But when the means of avoiding such a conduct, are so easily acquired, they must surely be very culpable for the neglect. Were it only on the score of *immediate* pleasure, which is in truth their great rule of conduct, it might be recommended to the sensual to gain some fondness for the acquisition of knowledge, that they might the better fill those intervals from pleasure which will sometimes be forced upon them. If indeed they could once bring themselves to feel delight in the acquisition of information, in the discovery of truth, and the expansion of their own views and conceptions, there would be some hope that they might be debarred from those gross and guilty practices, to which they have recourse. At all events, if it failed of producing this desirable effect, it would be attended with one good consequence—it would heighten the enjoyment of company, and afford a refuge from which they

might derive satisfaction, when all external objects failed of giving it.

Those who are bred wholly to active pursuits, rarely have the opportunity of acquiring such a stock of knowledge as will furnish materials for reflection, or such a taste for books as can make reading agreeable. And hence, most of this class of society, as soon as liberated from their ordinary employments, are seen strolling about to catch a piece of news, or seek relaxation among those as listless as themselves. Such indeed is sometimes the conduct of those whose opportunities have been greater, and who are therefore less excusable. When abstracted from their business, men, who have no relish for intellectual gratifications, are compelled to seek some diversion; and however gross and irrational, it is yet more tolerable than that tedium which they feel. It is not unfrequent, that those who have spent most of their lives in active employments, amid the noise and bustle of business, after having acquired a fortune, determine to enjoy it (as they are pleased to style it) in retirement. But this part of their lives, which is set apart for the express purpose of enjoyment, generally turns out to be the most miserable. After trying it long enough to find it intolerable, they have again to return to those labours and habits, which were once deemed burdensome and oppressive. The reason of this sad disappointment seems to be, that as objects of sense have, hitherto, wholly engrossed their attention, they are, by this circumstance, rendered incapable of deriving pleasure from the objects of intellect, which are the only means they can find in retirement. That this is true, appears from the different effects of retirement on those

who, in the course of active business, have paid some attention to the cultivation of the mind, and those who have not. While the former, in reading and contemplation, may make retirement agreeable, to the latter it becomes irksome and intolerable. It would be worth the while, therefore, for those who are now active, to cultivate some acquaintance with letters, to acquire some relish for books, if it were only in reference to a time of life when age will unfit for business, and wealth render labour unnecessary.

I. G.

#### THE EFFECTS OF POVERTY UPON MEN OF GENIUS.

FEW subjects have more frequently occupied the attention of writers, than the distresses which the poverty of men of genius has obliged them to undergo. The language of commiseration has been uniformly used on this occasion; and there have been few, I believe, whom the history of those whose sufferings have been not less remarkable than their superior productions, has not affected with feelings of regret. Poverty like theirs, would excite compassion, when experienced by men even of the least sensibility. Hunger, nakedness and imprisonment, require no peculiar situations for the infliction of their pains. But the distresses of these are always more intense, in proportion as the enjoyments once experienced, or hoped for, are exquisite; and men of genius feel this part of the suffering more, on account of their superior delicacy of feeling.

But the language of commiseration has, on this subject, become trite, and investigation may here enter on a field not often explored. The effect of their poverty on their wri-

tings, may afford a curious, if not useful subject of enquiry.

Poverty obliges an author to comply, servilely, with the public opinion. He must chase this deity through all her wanderings, through hogs as well as in the plain country, at least, if he would receive either applause or assistance from her votaries. The public taste is often incorrect, and the variations of public opinion on matters of taste, by their frequent occurrence, show that the public cannot always be right, because it is not always uniform and consistent with itself. But the author may be free from the contagion around him: his mind may despise the trammels with which genius has been loaded: he may feel the strong influence of natural genius, and possess a sound, critical judgment, formed by the cultivation of the best common sense. But all these do not break the bonds with which poverty has fettered him. Perhaps he might be willing to risk his fame (dear as it is to authors) on the success of productions modelled after nature, and approved by his own judgment, even when not conformed to the standard of popularity. But by a deviation from this, what does he risk? Not his prospect of fame merely, but his very daily bread. He dares not do this, and is, therefore, obliged to comply with every error which fashion has introduced. This effect, as far as it takes place, is to perpetuate bad taste, and to repress natural or elegant writing.

Another unhappy effect of poverty is, that it obliges authors to publish their works before they are finished. This is an injury to literature chiefly, although it may sometimes affect morals; but to literature the injury is serious, especially when the author is a man of superior talents. If

these defects were to be discovered by all, and their only consequence were to deprive us of the pleasure which excellence in the faulty part would have afforded, the injury would be comparatively unimportant. But, like all the errors of great men, they are chiefly detrimental on account of the imitation of others. Imitators as frequently copy the defects of a model as his excellencies; and are commonly much more successful in the former than in the latter case. These errors then are to be copied by many generations of inferior authors, who may feel the itch of writing, and yet want the power of distinguishing what is proper and excellent, from what is improper and mean, until the bright reputation of the original defaulter be reduced to a proper standard, by a fair exposition of his defects by impartial posterity.

But the poverty of men of genius, by the dependence which it creates on the patronage of the wealthy and powerful, both degrades literature and injures morality. The finest talents are, by this dependence, prostituted to the most unworthy purposes. Ingenuity is made to exert herself, for the support of the errors or wicked designs of a party; and Imagination is obliged to select her choicest decorations to cover the deformity of Vice, or to ornament the brow of rich Stupidity. From this dependence spring the servile dedications and fulsome poetical addresses, with which men of rank are so often saluted by men of letters. Nor can this degradation of genius be surprising to those who consider, that the man of genius has his wants as well as others. They are as numerous, and often greater than those of the generality of men. His family feel the

necessities of life as well as others; and their wants are more identified with his own, than in the case of common men, on account of the superior tenderness and sensibility usually attendant on genius. These considerations may, in some degree, palliate his faults, but they cannot excuse them. The man of genius, when urged to a prostitution of it, should consider himself as a martyr to truth and justice, and cheerfully undergo the persecutions and sufferings to which a non-compliance may expose him. But if they cannot excuse the crime, still less can they repair the injury.

But the effects of poverty are not all pernicious. With her evils, she brings some benefits.

It is probable that many of the exertions of men of genius, are solely owing to the pressure of poverty. The connection of talents with indolence is not unfrequent; and men of talents, if enabled to enjoy the comforts of life without exertion, would, probably, have amused themselves with the passive and speculative pleasures of taste, and not exerted the active powers of their genius. They have been commonly so fond of social pleasures, that they could be driven out of their sphere, into laborious exertions, only by some powerful motive, like the pressure of poverty. After the establishment of their reputation, poverty alone, in most cases, remains to command a continuance of their efforts. Whatever their success in a new attempt may be, it will add little to their reputation; and as it is doubtful, it may detract much from it. There are very many disagreeable things in an author's publishing his works; and if there be no urgent necessity for this, it is to be feared that many would

relinquish their hopes of applause, if they could leave with them the troubles of preparation, and their anxious solicitude about the success of the work.

Much of the energy of men of genius, is attributable to their poverty. This is always favourable to the creation and growth of energy: and more especially in those minds which feel some confidence in their own powers. Men of genius are never more disposed to make powerful exertions, than when adventitious aid seems denied to them. They then become possessed of an ardour which considers obstacles not to be placed for obstruction, but for conquest. They seem to become more elastic and powerful, by the weight laid upon them.

Another advantageous effect of poverty on the abilities of men of genius, is the acquaintance of human nature which it causes them to acquire. Their circumstances oblige them to associate with men in the lower walks of life, which certainly afford the best exhibitions of human nature. In the superior ranks of society, nature is always disguised under the trappings of art. Men are there accustomed to conceal the operations of their passions, and to counterfeit affections and emotions which they do not feel. Even when the passions shall have gone over the barriers imposed by refinement, their effects are so mingled with the ordinary habits of the individual, arising from his situation and circumstances, that when accurately described, the description will appear natural only to those of the same rank and habits. But in the lower classes of society, nature is seen under her own true appearance. The strong expressions of feeling which the various incidents

of life call for, are here, and almost only here, to be learnt. By describing these, pictures will be formed, whose correctness will be immediately and universally recognized. Poverty also, by making him more exposed to the accidents of life than he would otherwise have been, gives him more frequent opportunities of copying his own feelings as patterns, opportunities to which none rise superior. In short, if he would describe man, the writer must mingle with him where he is in active occupation. He must "take his instruments" and materials for drawing with him into the crowd, and sketch every thing remarkable as it passes before him; considering the inconveniences of his situation as amply compensated by the opportunities it presents of delineating correctly.

This subject might, probably, be extended much farther: and as it is not fully discussed, an opinion whether the poverty of its votaries is, on the whole, a detriment to letters, would appear rather a matter of presumption, than a decision of judgment.

S. N.

#### DETACHED SENTENCES.

MERE learning, however great, will not always produce opinions which are correct, when reduced to practice. This is immediately perceived, when we see the pernicious effects of systems, contrived by the ingenuity of schoolmen and theorists, when reduced to the regulation of society. They form erroneous opinions of human motives and intentions; supposing them either extremely virtuous or grossly wicked; that they have much firmness or much caprice; that they are too reasonable or too whimsical. Their manners, therefore, will be gentle,

rigid, censorious, or adulatory, according to their ideas of human nature. Learning will show, perhaps, what men *should be*—experience only, what they really *are*.

IT has often been mentioned, as a matter of wonder and regret, that men should vary so much in their opinions.—So far from being wonderful, it is perfectly natural; for we cannot but expect, that different degrees of acuteness will produce different opinions, and that the same result will not be found from operations wholly opposite. Nor can I think that a contrariety of opinion is so much to be regretted. Investigation is the result of uncertainty; this is learnt by having our opinions questioned—for not a few have been ruined because they have been built upon such ideas, as, while they suppose them self-evident, others have been demonstrating them to be incorrect. Opposition rouses activity, and produces study; and the cause of truth has, upon the whole, received additional strength from sophistry and doubt. Carneades used to say, "*If there were no Chrysippus, there would be no Carneades,*" intimating that he derived much wisdom from his opponent.

IT is thought by most people, that to change opinion is disgraceful; and many, for that reason, support opinions which they do not believe true, for the sake of preserving, as they suppose, their character for stability. This, however, if considered, is the most curious idea that can be imagined: for it is certainly singular, that a person would wish thus to revenge only on himself. As no one can know his real opinion but himself, no regret or sorrow can be entertained on the part of another; and

although many might wish that his opinion was different, himself only can be troubled with the consequences.—One erroneous opinion, like an error in figures, leads to very incorrect conclusions—and as the conduct of men arise from their sentiments, he who stifles error in preference to exposing it, stifles it only to his own disadvantage.

THE principle of setting to ourselves bounds for our conduct by any other person's, is evidently erroneous; because it is a fact attested by experience and observation, that those bounds are seldom attained; and that we are more liable to fall short than to overleap them: for from unforeseen circumstances and accidents, one's success, however probable, is often defeated, and his determinations, however resolute, often relinquished; so that it becomes absolutely necessary to aim higher than we shall probably reach, and strive, with unremitting zeal, to arrive at a point beyond the limits which any have attained.

I CONSIDER Marriage as a sacred bond of mutual, indissoluble friendship, intended only for persons of similar, virtuous dispositions; as a remedy for an evil, rather than a positive good; as a gift permitted to be enjoyed, rather than recommended; and as an institution growing out of the depravity, and not the virtue of the human character. On these accounts, the utmost caution and deliberation must be necessary to render it productive of happy consequences.

## POETRY.

### ON THE PROSPECT FROM EAST ROCK.\*

NOW, while the sun, with downward glance,  
Throws all Nature in a trance;  
While solemn silence reigns around,  
Unbroke, save by a murmur'ring sound,  
Or by the crow scarce seen on high,  
Cawing in the dizzy sky;  
Here, far remov'd from worldly strife,  
And freed from all the cares of life,  
On this rock, projecting rude,  
In a sober, musing mood,  
I'll sit, and muse upon the show  
So wildly, richly spread below.

Far distant as the eye can reach,  
Save, dim deseri'd, th' extended beach,  
Rising o'er the wat'ry scene,  
Like distant clouds, is seen to gleam:  
While, extended far and wide,  
The dark blue waters slowly glide,  
Sometimes gleaming, sometimes bright,  
As the sun's resplendent light,  
Shining on the wat'ry pillow,  
Flashes from the heaving billow.  
Now the breezes from the shore,  
Lightly skim its surface o'er,  
Dimpling, smiles the ruffled bay,  
As in sportive rounds they play;  
Now high in air they sportive dance,  
Now o'er the waves they lightly glane;  
Now the surface blithesome kiss,  
Waking all things into bliss.  
Such be my life, so calm and still,  
Free from every pain and ill:  
While harmless pleasure, cheerful toil,  
Engagements free from all turmoil,  
Just agitate life's peaceful ocean,  
But raise no storm or wild commotion.

Slow wafted by the idle gale,  
Mine eye has caught a distant sail;  
Now gradual less'ning so the eye,  
The less'ning bark melts into sky;  
But still, with eager gaze, in vain  
I dwell upon the wat'ry plain,  
Till dim around at every glane,  
The vanish'd sail is seen to dance,  
And the light specks now float on high,  
Now o'er the distant waters fly.  
So friends and pleasures we pursue,  
Departing, still we strain our view:

\* To those not acquainted with the situation of this rock, it may be observed, that it lays on the east side of New-Haven; from the top of which there is a fine view of the city, the harbour, and Long-Island Sound.

And e'en when vanish'd quite away,  
Fancy will oft usurp her sway,  
And present bring those objects fled,  
And conjure up to life the dead.

But see, projecting on each side,  
The jutting lands the tides divide,  
While between the verdant steep,  
Calm the peaceful water sleeps,  
Often shining through the wood,  
With a gleaming, silvery flood.  
While o'er the bay advancing,  
Mildly on the billow glancing,  
The light-house rears its modest head,  
Scarce seen above its wat'ry bed ;  
How little, trifling does it seem,  
While the wind's hush'd, and all's serene !  
But should the storm in fury rise,  
And lash the billows to the skies,  
Then ! then it stands supremely great,  
Sole hope, sole refuge then from fate.  
So shines Religion here below,  
Beauteous, lovely, void of show ;  
How little priz'd its modest beam,  
While pleasure gilds the earthly scene !  
But should Misfortune's clouds once lower,  
How much we need its saving power !

Stretch'd along the harbour's side,  
See the city spreading wide,  
Offers to the sunny ray  
A thousand gaudy colours gay,  
While he tufted trees between,  
Shine with the richest green ;  
And the steeples rising high,  
Point their tapers to the sky.  
While oft is wafted on the gale,  
O'er many a meadow, many a dale,  
The distant waggon's rattling jar,  
The echoing hammer heard afar ;  
The heavy, droning, tedious note  
Of busy hum from men remote.  
Or far beneath is heard the sound  
The daring workman wakes around ;  
Who, clinging to the mountain's side,  
Rends from the rock its boary pride,  
Which leaps from high with crashing sound,  
And falling, shakes the trembling ground ;  
While echoes from the mountain steep,  
With deepen'd tone the sound repeat.  
Sometimes heard the water's brawl,  
As it murmurs in its fall ;  
And as we listen still, we hear  
The same dull note strike in the ear.  
An emblem this of those who glide,  
Without one effort, down life's tide ;  
Whose plodding course presents to view  
A tedious road of sombre hue.

Now o'er the landscape wide,  
My eyes with rapture glide :  
What various beauties strike my view ;  
What prospects rising, ever new !

The waving corn, the meadow ground,  
The flocks and cattle feeding round ;  
The tufted trees, the hillocks green,  
The distant houses, scarcely seen,  
Peeping from the mountain's side,  
O'er the smiling landscape wide ;  
The winding, babbling shrub-bound rill,  
Gleaming from the shady hill ;  
The distant ships that steady glide,  
Wafted o'er the briny tide,  
Wooing to each snowy sail  
The sportive, light, inconstant gale.

Such is the scene wide spread below,  
So lovely does the landscape show ;  
How soon, alas ! may change the face  
Of all that now the prospect grace ;  
A few years more, the traveller's eye  
In vain will seek around to spy  
Those scenes that now attract the view,  
Cloth'd in nature's loveliest hue ;  
In vain will seek the busy race,  
Who toil for honour, wealth and place ;  
And future times as little know  
Of all our schemes, our pomp and show,  
As we of those who here have stood,  
And gaz'd with wonder on the flood :  
A few years since, the war-whoop shrill,  
Was echoed back from every hill ;  
And he who wound the plain below,  
The Indian hunter's form might know,  
As high above he fearless sprung,  
While to his step the mountain rung.  
But now no more do any meet  
The traces of the Indian's feet ;  
The warrior's form is lowly laid,  
Unnotic'd, in the lonely glade ;  
The dusty race have long since fled  
To their last and peaceful bed ;  
Their sun is set, their day is past ;  
Our night, too soon, will come at last.

2. A.

## TO —————.

YES, Fame, I own, has been my theme,  
And bays I've hop'd to share ;  
But never had I dar'd to dream  
Of laurels from the fair.

But, ah, the fate of mortal things !  
The charm was scarce convey'd,  
Ere Time had lent its lustre wings,  
'Twas wither'd and decay'd.

Thus fame at distance meets our eyes,  
It blooms serene and bland ;  
But when we grasp the fragile prize,  
It withers in our hand.

ACADEMICUS.